

ASLEF

The ASSOCIATED SOCIETY of LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & FIREMEN

JOURNAL



FEBRUARY 2016

Sun sets on Kellingley

PAUL ROUTLEDGE mourns the closure
of a colliery and the death of an industry

SIMON WELLER explains what the
end of contracting out means to you

ANDY HUDD makes the case for
Sundays in the working week

Cliff Blackwell:
life on the rails



70 years of Thomas
the Tank Engine



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Mick says rail ministers are reducing their options

Strikes the result of breaking bad

SHOULD we accept bad faith? It occurs to me that all of our current industrial issues are driven by people who unilaterally operate outside the collective bargaining and framework agreements we have in place. Having reacted, on behalf of our members, listened to their wishes, balloted, and jumped through all hoops, industrially and politically, we get castigated for daring to protect our conditions and our families' futures. So it is with great pride that I congratulate our members in ATW for their recent solidarity and wish them, and our members on the Tube, every success in the ongoing struggles.

On your behalf we sent messages of support to the BMA, who are going through a process we recognise, of Jeremy Hunt announcing wholesale changes to working practices that devalue a vocational role and, according to the doctors, will make them, and patient care, worse off whilst twisting the data and using the media to demonise them. One commentator on *Question Time* said they were led by radical left-wingers and the strikes are political; that smacks of desperation when talking of a group that put patients first and have not taken action for 40 years.

We never believed that the controllers of the vested interests, with the creation of the Rail Delivery Group, could or would work together for the good of our industry by giving leadership; they became a mouthpiece for politically promoting privatisation and we welcome, after many complaints, them now being banned from doing so.

We argued for Directly Operated Rail to remain on the East Coast as a public comparator, due to its unrivalled success in performance, passenger satisfaction, and financial returns to the government, but it seems it has been wound down and the role given to a group of privateers – Arup, EY and Interfleet, rebranded SNC Lavalin Rail & Transit – to provide a stand-by service on retainer. I doubt we will see the success of DOR mirrored again. As Lilian Greenwood said, 'Ministers are reducing their options for reforming the railways and undermining their own bargaining position.'

Redundancies in the steel industry, mainly in South Wales, but also in Corby and Hartlepool, frighten me, not only for the supply chain but for the future of manufacturing in the UK. How can we talk of an industrial future without having the means to deliver it? It is time to protect our industry from the subsidised dumping of goods and materials and to recognise that TTIP will only make the position worse, not better.

Yours fraternally

Mick Whelan, general secretary



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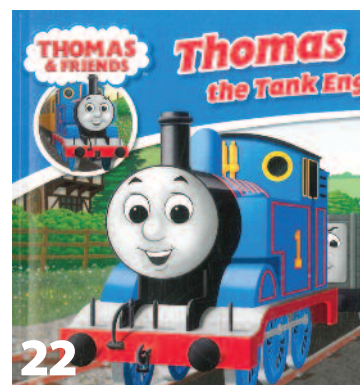
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Campaigning for fairer fares

A SLEF activists were out in force at Britain's railway stations on 4 January for an Action for Rail protest about rising fares as the privatised train operating companies look to make fatter profits off the backs of hard-pressed passengers.

Mick Whelan, ASLEF's general secretary; DO6 Dicky Fisher; and DO8 Finn Brennan were joined at King's Cross first thing in the morning by Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and Shadow Transport Secretary Lilian Greenwood as well as Mick Cash of the RMT and Manuel Cortes of the TSSA.

ASLEF, RMT and Labour Party members were also out in force at Doncaster station handing out postcards opposing the price



Lilian Greenwood, Jeremy Corbyn and Mick Whelan at King's Cross (left) and Rosie Winterton joins Tosh in Donny

increases and calling for the return of the railways to public ownership. 'Rosie Winterton, Labour Chief Whip, joined us for a while,' said EC president Tosh McDonald, adding, as she was

made a Dame in the New Year honours list, and it was still the panto season, 'Oh no, she didn't.' 'Oh yes, she did!'

The 1% increase in season ticket prices and other regulated

fares – a direct consequence of rail privatisation – means that the cost to commuters has risen by 25% in the last five years. Research shows that £1.5 billion could be saved over the next five years if the railway routes up for renewal were returned to the public sector.

Jeremy Corbyn tweeted: 'Campaigning this morning for fairer fares as ticket prices have increased by up to £2,000 since 2010.'

QUOTE...

'The top 1%'s share of our nation's income has more than doubled since 1980 and their share of wealth now exceeds that of the poorest 50% of the population.' – Marc Stears, Professor of Political Theory, University College, Oxford

...UNQUOTE

Night Tube action

The decision by ASLEF's executive committee to announce three more 24 hour strikes on London Underground brought TfL back to the negotiating table to try and resolve the dispute over pay and the introduction of the Night Tube service.

Finn Brennan, ASLEF's organiser on LU, said: 'This is not a decision we have taken lightly. We genuinely regret the inconvenience that will be caused but the behaviour of LU's senior management

team has left us with no choice. Our negotiating team last met LU at ACAS on 10 November and, since then, they have refused to talk to us despite repeated requests. Our members have been extremely patient, they have waited for more than three and half years for promised talks on improving their work/life balance. There is still no indication when they will receive the pay rise that was due last April.'

Hours after the EC announced industrial



Finn: ready for talks

action, and after two months refusing to negotiate with us, TfL invited us for talks at ACAS. 'We are ready to talk at any time to finally resolve this dispute,' said Finn. 'It is time for the Mayor of London and his team at TfL to stop the political posturing and engage with us to stop London suffering more disruption.'

Lobbying the Lords

ASLEF has been lobbying members of the House of Lords during the passage of the Trade Union Bill through the upper house in a bid to gain some concessions. GS Mick Whelan said: 'You won't be surprised to know my union has a number of concerns about the Bill, including its political and industrial consequences, and its wider impact on democracy and civil liberties.'

He told peers: 'I don't believe it is right for a Conservative government to use its majority in the House of Commons to introduce highly partisan measures that help the Conservative Party at election time. The current government is also making it harder to register to vote and are redrawing the parliamentary map to their advantage.'

'The Trade Union Bill contains a clause which is deliberately designed to cut financial support to the Labour Party. If enacted this would create an overwhelming funding imbalance in our political system by decimating the Labour Party's funding while leaving the Conservative Party's finances untouched.'

'The Bill seeks to backdate the law so 5 million trade union members in political funds will have their membership cancelled. Under the provisions unions will have just three months to re-recruit those members. If this change is enacted it should not be retrospective; instead it should only apply to new members. If that is not possible, unions should be given a reasonable time period for transition to the new system.'

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

 John Monks reminds House of contribution of trade unions – the weekend, sick pay, equal pay for women. Stephen Cavalier

 An affordable railway that puts people before profit. Action for Rail

 Sacked by Jeremy Corbyn for too much straight talking, honest politics. Husband. Dad. Beatles & curry obsessive. All my teams play in red. Michael Dugher



Strike brings ATW back to the table

A rock solid strike by ASLEF drivers at Arriva Trains Wales on Monday 4 January – the first day back at work for most people this year – forced the company back to the negotiating table. 'Following a strike during which no ATW trains ran, and ASLEF members stood solid, further talks were arranged to try and resolve the dispute over working conditions,' said Simon Weller, ASLEF's national organiser.

When, because of management intransigence, these talks failed our executive committee called another 24 hour strike for Monday 1 February. Changes by ATW to an agreement struck following last ditch talks to avert industrial action in November



are at the centre of the current dispute.

ASLEF has also withdrawn overtime working which has exposed ATW's chronic shortage of

ASLEF in action in Cardiff (top), Holyhead (centre), and Shrewsbury (bottom)

train drivers as the company is unable to cover its basic bread and butter services. ATW, like most of the privatised TOCs, does not employ enough drivers to provide the services it pledged, when it won its franchise, to run.

QUOTE...

'We are in danger of becoming the political equivalent of Millwall football club.' **Mary Creagh, Labour Member of Parliament for Wakefield**

...UNQUOTE

RDG rapped for political bias

Train companies have agreed to act with propriety and curb their political bias after the taxpayer-funded rail industry mouthpiece broke the rules by sending a barrage of pro-privatisation emails and attacked Labour during the party's conference. The Department for Transport has rapped the Rail Delivery Group, which represents train operators, across the knuckles following complaints from Shadow Transport Secretary Lilian Greenwood. A chastened RDG has promised to adopt 'a communications protocol... ensuring political impartiality' in its communications activity.

CONFERENCES: The **Scottish TUC** is at the Caird Hall in Dundee from Monday 18 to Wednesday 20 April. ASLEF's **annual assembly of delegates** is at the Macdonald Highlands hotel, Aviemore, from Monday 9 to Friday 13 May. The **Welsh TUC** is at the Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Tuesday 24 to Thursday 26 May. The **Durham Miners' Gala** is on Saturday 9 July. The **Tolpuddle Martyrs' festival**, near Dorchester, is from Friday 15 to Sunday 17 July. The **Trades Union Congress** is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 11 to Wednesday 14 September. The **Labour Party conference** is at the BT convention centre in Liverpool from Sunday 25 to Wednesday 28 September.

500 CLUB: A Bullock, with number 213, won the February draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £374.

Off the rails



SOUTHEASTERN bosses dropped themselves in the sticky stuff when they blamed rush hour delays on, er, 'too much sun.' Hapless Southeastern managers tweeted: 'We had severe congestion through Lewisham due to dispatching issues as a result of strong sunlight this morning.' Passengers, perhaps predictably, found the explanation risible. 'Leaves on the line,' muttered Brian Barnett. 'Wrong snow. Now sunshine! What's the next excuse from Southeastern?'



JOHN McDONNELL took off the gloves on the Labour right on Channel 4 News after Stephen Doughty, Kevan Jones and Jonathan Reynolds resigned from the Labour front bench following Jeremy Corbyn's reshuffle last month. 'There's a group within the Labour Party who have a right-wing conservative agenda. Within Progress itself, there are some who are quite hard right, and they've never accepted Jeremy's leadership.'



YUGOV asked people with which *Star Wars* character do they most identify our dear political leaders. Voters – who may or may not have been fans of the big screen sci-fi series – identified David Cameron as Darth Vader; Jeremy Corbyn as either Obi Wan Kenobi or Yoda; and Tim Farron as Wicket the Ewok or C3PO. May, er, the force be with you...



TRAIN journeys, in Russia, are measured not in hours but in days; it takes six days to travel the 4,000 miles from Moscow to Vladivostok. 'In Western Europe people die because their space is cramped and suffocating,' said the playwright and short story writer Anton Chekhov. 'In Russia they die because the space is an endless expanse.'



DESPITE the tree this wasn't Father Christmas at the Kellingley club with the NUM but ASLEF's president Tosh McDonald. 'Spoke at their retired members' tea with lots of guys there redundant today. One of the most emotional things I've ever done. On the march through the village tomorrow with the ASLEF banner. F*** the Tories, f*** Thatcher and f*** Cameron and Osborne.'

TOSH has had an account at the Co-operative Bank since leaving school. 'But they have dumped a number of progressive organisations so just been and closed my account and transferred everything to Nationwide. At least it's still a building society. Sad day but now having a pint in our local authority run pub. The more you drink the more good you do the community!'

THE Tory government's floods boss, Sir Philip Dilley, was forced to quit after he dilly-dallied over Christmas. He had to admit that when he said he was 'working from home' while Britain was under water he was sunning himself in the Caribbean. Jim Fitzpatrick, Labour MP for Poplar & Limehouse, said Dilley was 'a disaster.' Dilley said 'I can't guarantee there will never be a flood event while I'm away.' David Cameron decided Dilley 'the disaster' had to go.

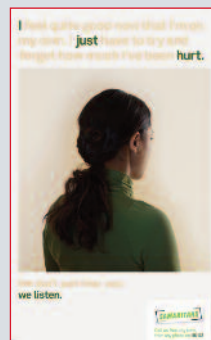
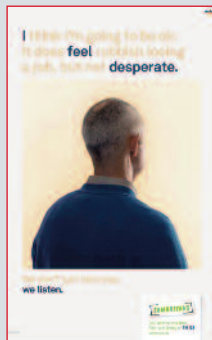
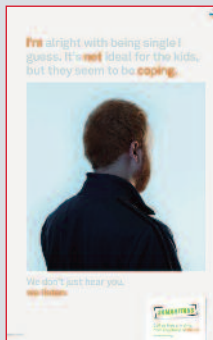
Samaritans unveil new rail suicide campaign

DAVID MASTERS, project officer, Network Rail, at the Samaritans, lifts the lid on the charity's new suicide prevention campaign

THIS month a new Samaritans communications campaign – called 'We don't just hear you, we listen' – will be launched across the rail network. The campaign includes posters that will replace the existing campaign which has been running since

2012.

The aim of our new campaign is to prompt behavioural change and to encourage those who are most at risk to seek help whenever they are struggling to cope. It is also designed to raise awareness, and increase people's



Three of the Samaritans' new suicide prevention posters

understanding of the Samaritans, and what we do, so people see the act of calling our helpline as a positive and empowering first step in taking back control of their lives.

The new

campaign – which will be rolled out across the rail network on posters and digital formats from Tuesday 16 February – focuses on the expert listening service provided by

Samaritans volunteers.

The creative work contains hidden messages to highlight the real meaning behind a series of apparently everyday

conversations, accompanied by images of a range of different people with their heads turned away from the camera – illustrating the sense of isolation some people feel when they are struggling to cope.

The posters will soon become familiar on stations up and down the country. It is anticipated that the campaign will run for two years.

● You can call us free at any time, from any phone, on 116 123 or visit samaritans.org

Privatising Network Rail would put passengers at risk

P RIVATISING Network Rail could put passenger safety at risk, and lead to higher fares, according to a new report. The paper – *Staying on the Right Track* by John Stittle, Professor of Accounting at Essex University – also warns of a 'disastrous' return to the days of Railtrack if NR becomes a for-profit company.

The report was commissioned by the TUC's Action for Rail campaign in response to the government consultation, being undertaken by Nicola Shaw, into the future shape and financing of Network Rail.

It warns that

privatising NR could lead to a decline in safety standards and notes that under NR's privatised predecessor, Railtrack, there were far more workplace accidents, broken rails and trains ignoring emergency signals. 'If NR is devolved or sold off this could threaten the substantial improvements in passenger safety made since Railtrack's collapse.'

It warns that 'money that should be spent improving the UK's rail infrastructure will end up going to shareholders' and notes that 'Railtrack, even when posting

big losses, still paid out huge dividends.'

And it warns that the cost of future improvements will have to be passed on to taxpayers or funded by higher fares. 'The cost of upgrading the West Coast main line skyrocketed from £2.5 billion to £14.5 billion under Railtrack's management.'

The report concludes: 'Handing control back to the private sector would pose a huge risk to the taxpayer.'

Frances O'Grady, general secretary of the TUC, said: 'Network Rail must remain a public body. The last thing passengers and taxpayers need is a return to the disastrous days of Railtrack, which resulted in years of under-investment. Privatising NR would be repeating the mistakes of the past and could lead to a worryingly decline in safety standards and higher fares.'

Simon hands out long service awards in North Lanarkshire



Beer and badges at the Bentley

Trade Union Bill.

At the end of the meeting he presented long service awards to G Kennedy, A Cameron and J Foster (25 years) and J Lafferty (35) and made a retirement presentation to F Keenan.

ANDY JONES, Motherwell branch secretary, reports on their AGM

Forty members of Motherwell branch turned out to hear a detailed report from national organiser Simon Weller at the Bentley Hotel on 20 December.

The meeting started on a sad note with a minute's silence for Bro W Smillie, who tragically passed away in November. Simon informed us about all the issues ASLEF is currently facing, including pensions and the new

QUOTE...

'The modern world – not just Britain – is a product of the railway. Trains are still the bedrock of social and economic progress.' – Nigel Harris in *Rail* magazine

...UNQUOTE



Marz Colombini models ASLEF's Kes tee-shirt – with a Harvey Smith to the Tories' anti-Trade Union Bill – based on the iconic image from the famous Ken Loach film. £10 (inc p&p); email admin@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk

Is this the end of the line for Farmer Smith?

THE Office of Rail and Road has begun criminal proceedings against the West Coast Railway Company and one of its drivers.

West Coast – run by David Smith, a Yorkshire farmer who, according to an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, ‘runs it in an authoritarian manner and treats it like his own private train set’ – is Britain’s biggest heritage operator. It runs 500 trains a year, including the famous Jacobite service from Fort William to Mallaig featured in the *Harry Potter* films.

The company has been involved in a litany of safety incidents, but the final straw for the regulator was a near miss at Wootton Bassett on 7 March when the steam locomotive Tangmere, pulling 13 carriages between Bristol Temple Meads and Southend Victoria, ran a red light at 5.25pm and came to rest at a busy junction on the Great Western main line just moments after a high speed FGV passenger train, travelling at 100mph from Swansea to Paddington, had passed.

An ORR investigation revealed that Farmer Smith’s staff had turned off the Train Protection Warning System – essential safety equipment designed to apply an emergency brake if the driver makes an error.

Ian Prosser, chief inspector of railways at the ORR, said: ‘The safety of staff, volunteers, passengers and members of the public is our absolute priority. Britain’s railways have a good



Tangmere, a Battle of Britain class loco built at Brighton in 1947, in its Southern Railway livery as the Spitfire Hop Pickers’ Special for Shepherd & Neame at the Faversham Hop Festival; a First Great Western high speed train; and the West Coast Railways badge of shame which might soon be off the rails

safety record. However, there have been a number of incidents over the past year involving West Coast Railway Company trains.

‘The incident at Wootton Bassett junction, where a WCRC train passed a signal at danger, was caused by alleged intentional misuse of a key safety system. This could easily have led to a catastrophic collision.’

The ORR has also launched a review of WCRC’s safety certificate, which it needs to operate trains on the rail network. The future of steam trains running on Britain’s main lines is now in serious doubt.

Ian Bertram, principal inspector of railways, wrote to Farmer Smith after another serious safety breach, again involving TPWS tampering, this time at the Hexthorpe goods chord, Doncaster, on 2 October.

‘This follows a similar incident, when TPWS equipment was interfered with, resulting in a signal being passed at danger at Wootton Bassett, in which a catastrophic incident nearly occurred.

‘The recent repeat incident at Hexthorpe highlights that lessons have not been adequately learned and risk is not being

effectively controlled by WCRC. Our main areas of concern are management capability; governance and assurance. We have received concerns from a number of parties relating to WCRC’s ability to manage the safety of its operation.

‘The ORR has serious concerns that WCRC is no longer satisfying the conditions of its safety certificate and that a significant risk is arising as a result. You should be aware that if the ORR decides to revoke WCRC’s safety certificate this would create serious doubt as to whether it complies with the professional competence requirements that must be met in order to continue to hold a European train operator’s licence.’

QUOTE...

‘In the perpetual struggle between labour and capital, it is no secret which side has the upper hand.’ – Stephen Foley in FT Ambitious Wealth

...UNQUOTE



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Let's keep our railways safe

MOST people – including most Conservative voters – are against selling off state-owned Network Rail. A poll, carried out by Survation for the campaign group We Own It, reveals that 59% of people surveyed, including 51% of Tories, believe the organisation that manages Britain's railway infrastructure should remain in public ownership.

The research shows that 67% believe that fares will become even more expensive if the

government opts for 'full privatisation,' as Richard Branson has proposed, and passenger safety will be seriously compromised if NR is fragmented and sold off.

Just 24% – fewer than 1:4 voters – think NR should be privatised and, even among Tory voters, only 37% favour a sell-off.

Rail infrastructure was taken back into public ownership in 2002 following a series of fatal crashes caused by years of financial



Cat Hobbs (left) with Mick Whelan at a Labour Party conference fringe event on public ownership

neglect. Railtrack, a group of corner-cutting private companies which took over after the Major government privatised the railways in 1994, was held responsible for 42 deaths in collisions at Southall in 1997, Ladbroke Grove in 1999 and Hatfield in

2000.

Cat Hobbs, director of We Own It, said: 'Safety is a top priority and Railtrack compromised that. Let's keep our railways safe and move towards public ownership of the whole network.'

THE THINGS THEY SAY

Oliver Letwin, David Cameron's policy chief, was outed as an old school racist after the release of government papers kept secret for 30 years. Letwin, as an adviser to Margaret Thatcher, blamed black people and their 'bad moral attitudes' for the riots on the Broadwater Farm estate in north London. He claimed, in a memo on Downing Street headed paper, that the violent unrest on the streets of Tottenham had nothing to do with social deprivation, and haughtily dismissed plans to encourage black businesses by saying the money would be wasted because black people are only interested in the 'disco and drug trade.' Tom Watson, Labour's deputy leader, forced Letwin to apologise.

ETCS TEST TRAIN RUNS THROUGH CENTRAL LONDON

A Class 313 test unit has run through central London completely under the control of the European Train Control System for two weekends. The move marks the culmination of six years of development on Thameslink and is the first time a train on the national rail network has run under the cab signalling system in the capital. Eventually it will allow 24 trains to run in each direction every hour between Blackfriars and St Pancras.

NETWORK RAIL CHIEF DENIES FIRE SALE OF ASSETS

Sir Peter Hendy, the new chairman of Network Rail, says the group, which is selling £1.8 billion of assets, is not desperate for funds and insists his plan to offload depots, arches and station shops does not amount to a fire sale. 'We have to achieve £1.8 billion by March 2019. It's not a fire sale, it'll be done in an orderly fashion. We want to get proper value for the public purse.'

Cracks in sea wall halt coastal trains

Southeastern cancelled services between Folkestone and Dover Priory in Kent after cracks appeared in the sea wall over Christmas. High speed trains were diverted to Ramsgate via Canterbury West. Sinkholes up to 3m deep then appeared underneath the railway tracks that run along the top of the wall.

Network Rail said: 'We know how important the railway is for people and our orange army is working around the clock.' Richard Dean of Southeastern said the solution might be 'a question of redesigning the railway.'



The damage, which appeared on Christmas Eve, was caused by the sea and the wintry weather



Retired Thornaby drivers Roger Sonley, Keith Heseltine and Bob Barron receive their 50 year medallions from LDC rep Geoff Burton.



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QUOTE...

'Every airport suffers the odd delayed flight. In Britain, it is the runways that fail to arrive on time. No new full-length airstrip has been built to serve London since the Second World War. The Conservative government promised to make a decision by the end of 2015. Of course, it hasn't; the Department for Transport announced there will be no ruling until summer. Delaying the decision will smooth Zac Goldsmith's path to City Hall.'

– The Economist

...UNQUOTE

Ballroom blitz



Under Clapham Common

Beneath Clapham South Tube station, 120ft below the surface, lie an extraordinary warren of tunnels which provided shelter for 8,000 men, women and children from Nazi bombs falling on the capital during the Second World War. They later became temporary dormitories for immigrants from Commonwealth countries before they found permanent homes. Now the tunnels have been opened to the public – although you can't stay the night – by the London Transport Museum.

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A Day in the Life

District 5 Organiser NIGEL GIBSON reports on a busy year and offers a revealing insight into what a district officer does for members

PART of my role requires me to be lead officer in negotiations with the companies allocated to me by the general secretary. We have an excellent group of company council reps throughout ASLEF, and I work closely with those elected.

GB RAILFREIGHT

Unfortunately, our members at GBRf have suffered from the fall in coal traffic and the company council has been working closely with the employer to establish a fair way of dealing with the surpluses created. We did, however, secure a 2.3% increase in salaries on a one year deal. Barry Hare was elected to represent ASLEF on the Eurotunnel European works council.

FREIGHTLINER HEAVY HAUL

Our members have seen a notable drop off in work following the huge reduction in coal traffic, which formed 70% of the company's core work, in 2015. I have been working closely with business council reps and the company to ameliorate the effects of this loss of work. With RPI very low members asked us to pursue improvements to conditions and we will see the introduction of 156 rest days pa; rest day protection introducing 32/56 hour rests; and no more than three roster changes pa.

FREIGHTLINER INTERMODAL

Change of parent company – to Genossee & Wyoming, a US company – has seen a focus on safety, concentrating on eradicating personal injury claims. The introduction of safety glasses and a no reverse parking policy are part of this but G&W seem less interested in day to day issues such as mess room facilities and safe walking routes. On 1 January members got a 3% increase in base salary as year three of our pay deal kicked in (equating to a significant 2.1% above RPI). Andy Bullock of Saltley was elected to



business council and replaces Richard Darke.

C2C

With National Express taking on the 15 year franchise the company now has to deliver on its commitments. That includes the introduction of 12 car DOO working and our h&s reps have been working to ensure that any system is fit for purpose. We also reached agreement on a three year pay offer which saw the base salary, with Sundays already part of the working week, increased to £50,000 in year 1 along with improvements to t&cs including salary protection for drivers removed through competency; a commitment to reduce the maximum turn length to 9h 30m; a reduction from an average 36 to 35 hour week; and the eradication of starter driver rates whilst ring-fencing existing depot drivers in line of promotion to drivers.

ABELLIO GREATER ANGLIA

The early part of 2015 was spent dealing with the TUPE of members to LOROL and MTR Crossrail with the West Anglia inners and Chingford depot being taken over by LOROL, and Gidea Park and part of Ilford forming the new driver base for Crossrail. Alan Edwards and Steve Meredith moved over to be company council reps at the respective companies and Steve Panks was elected as West Anglia rep to join Steve Wight and Andy Gordon. We reached agreement on a two year pay review which increased salaries by 3% in year one and no less than 2.5% in year two.

MTR CROSSRAIL

We have been working with MTR Crossrail and Bombardier on the development of the new Class 345 units and the cab



Nigel looks back on another busy year

environment. There is an extensive recruitment process taking place with monthly training schools. ASLEF negotiated a new set of t&cs which will bring Sundays into the working week along with other improvements to conditions and salaries to be implemented on 1 May.

DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

I represented members at competence, development, process and disciplinary hearings. Aside from mobile phones and d&a failures, the most difficult are those when an individual has failed to report an incident; it is clear that the industry as a whole is taking such circumstances more seriously.

DISTRICT COUNCIL

I attended all four meetings in 2015. Delegates took the opportunity to discuss a wide range of topics: industrial; political; equality; and ASLEF policy and organising. It was a great pleasure to see the District 5 banner finally delivered.

BRANCH MEETINGS

I attended Barking main line; Bishops Stortford; Bletchley; Bristol; Cambridge; Chingford; Clacton; Colchester; Crewe; Eastleigh; Edinburgh No 1; Ilford; Ipswich; King's Cross; King's Lynn; Knottingley; Lincoln; Norwich; Parkeston; Peterborough; Shoeburyness; Saltley; Southend; Tilbury; Thornaby; Waterloo; and Worcester to report on issues affecting members and make presentations for loyalty to ASLEF. It was sad to see the closure of Parkeston, but a pleasure to see so many past and present activists there. Our 20 remaining branches continue to operate on behalf of

members and I am always pleased to be invited.

POLITICS

A disappointing general election result but great to see Clive Lewis elected as MP for Norwich South and Daniel Zeichner for Cambridge. Our EC member Howard Kaye stood in South West Surrey and admirably reduced Jeremy Hunt's majority. I joined the ASLEF delegation to the East of England Labour Party in Stevenage which was very well attended with a far greater level of engagement from trade unions and activists clearly enthused by the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader. ASLEF held a fringe meeting to discuss privatisation and the benefits of a publicly owned railway.

RALLIES

ASLEF has raised its profile at the Burston strike school rally and I also attended the May Day march; Tolpuddle Martyrs' festival; London Pride; and the Durham Miners' Gala.

AAD

ASLEF's annual conference was held in our district – at the Palace Hotel in Southend – for the first time since the 1960s. It was a great success.

I have been proud to represent ASLEF and District 5 throughout 2015 and am grateful for the support I have had from Howard Kaye and all the reps I work with. I believe we have an excellent ASLEF team, with Mick Whelan as our general secretary, Simon Weller, our national organiser, a strong executive committee and good reps who dedicate time to further the interests of our members.

Sundays in the working week



Six days ye shall labour, but on the seventh day ye shall rest. That's what it says in Exodus. But that doesn't apply to train drivers.

Sundays as part of the working week is an emotive issue, and one with a history. Here **ANDY HUDD, executive committee member for District 7, makes the case for making the Sabbath part of our working week**

OUR aspirations in the ASLEF charter, relating to overtime and rest days, are clear: 'All free time off from duty to be rostered consecutively, to be guaranteed and mandatory by the elimination of institutionalised overtime.'

Sundays in the working week is an emotive issue and one that also has a history. Prior to privatization, our annual assembly of delegates decided that, as a trade union, we should aspire to having Sundays included in the working week.

This was in response to concerns that, because we rostered Sundays, and agreed a rate of pay for them, they might be considered an implied term under our contracts of employment.

I DON'T WORK SUNDAYS

Being an executive committee member, representing District 7, it would be no surprise to you when I say that I fully support the charter and our policy on having Sundays in the working week, but I do so not just on the professional level, but on a personal level, too.

I don't work Sundays. I haven't done for about six years and, before that, I only worked the Sundays that I was rostered to work. The main reason for this is that I have a simple family life in which Sundays and rest days are the only guaranteed days on which I will have the opportunity to catch up with those who are closest to me.

Unfortunately, Sundays aren't given the same value when rostered outside of the working week; every other day free from duty is worth 36 hours (unless alongside another free day when it is still worth at least 24) but this is not the case with Sundays.

ENFORCED OVERTIME

I also don't like the fact that (at least on paper) having a commitment to work Sundays amounts to enforced overtime and is not always paid at a rate that reflects the sacrifice I make.

I do acknowledge, however, that, for the majority, having a commitment to work does not necessarily mean that it is so. We have those who give away their Sundays to those



ASLEF's annual assembly of delegates, the policy making parliament of our union, decided to make Sunday part of our working week

who wish to make a little more in overtime and, in many cases, the system works well.

For me, though, when it comes to Sundays in the working week the pros still outweigh the cons. Our policy means that I'll have a 'clean' salary that is fully pensionable with those days included in holiday and sick pay arrangements.

It also means an extra 52 rest days per year and an increase in establishment to accommodate this. As well as an increase in

“ THE REDUCED SERVICE ON WEEKENDS IS IN DANGER OF BECOMING A THING OF THE PAST ”

headline salary, it also gives rise to the opportunity to have a better work/life balance through the increase in guaranteed rest days and improvements to rostering flexibility that will help achieve the coveted 36 hours free from duty.

Our industry has changed a lot since the original conference decision, but the principles are correct, and entirely relevant today.

We are witnessing an ever-expanding railway with the capacity of our network being



ASLEF
THE TRAIN DRIVERS' UNION

stretched to the full. We are seeing increasing numbers of passengers, no matter what day of the week, or time of day, we travel.

I cannot be the only one who envisages that the reduced service we currently enjoy on weekends is in danger of becoming a thing of the past as Saturday and Sunday blend, for many people, into the rest of the week.

PRIDE IN OUR CRAFT

So with this in mind there is one more point to think about and that is that we provide a public service; and we endeavour to do so with a pride and professionalism that befits our craft. So any expansion or growth in our industry is one we should embrace and while Sundays outside of the working week are precious to some we should also bear in mind that our railway here in Britain is changing.

And with Sundays in the working week we will guarantee an increased service with ASLEF members on the front – this would not only be good for our trade union but good for the railway industry as a whole.

End of the mine – the sun sets on King Coal



Kellingley colliery, the last deep coal mine in the UK, was closed just before Christmas, marking the end of an industry which turned Britain into a global power. PAUL ROUTLEDGE reflects on the disappearance of an industry which, 100 years ago, employed 1 million men, and the close relationships between railwaymen and miners

KING Coal once ruled this country's industry, but his reign would have been short without the princes of the footplate. For two hundred years, train drivers took the 'black gold' from colliery to factory, gasworks, docks, electricity generating stations, steelworks, fuel merchants – and motive power depots. From the mines of the Welsh valleys to the Kingdom of Fife, from the hills of Somerset to the plains of south Yorkshire, from the shores of Kent to the Forest of Dean, railways were the arteries of the British economy. And coal was the lifeblood. Generations of footplatemen earned their living from transporting it – and shovelling it into the hungry mouths of steam locomotives.

EVERY COLLIERY HAD A RAIL LINK

The railways were major consumers of coal, as every fireman learned, shifting tons of the stuff on long distance journeys or just on pick-up trips to the pits.

Every colliery – and there were thousands – had to have a rail link. The coming of the railway preceded the 19th century boom in mining – indeed, you could say it fathered the industry that powered Britain's industrial revolution.

The roots of this trade go back to the reign of George II, the bonking, bad-tempered monarch who died on the pot, when even the canals were still in their infancy. The Middleton Railway was the first purpose-built coal route, empowered by Act of Parliament in 1758, to construct a waggonway into the heart of Leeds 'for the better supplying of coals.'

It became the first to adopt steam traction in 1812, with the locomotive *Salamanca*, and employed the first professional engine driver, James Hewitt, a former pit surface labourer. He was also probably the first footplate casualty – killed by a boiler explosion in 1834.

Despite switching from locomotive to stationary winding, Middleton set the pattern that endured for centuries. Landowners keen to develop the minerals beneath their land built lines at breakneck speed to cash in on the huge profits to be made from feeding the hungry mills, factories and family hearths.

By the 1930s coal and coke formed 65% of freight on rail, and while this lucrative trade began to decline in the post-war years, the introduction of 'merry-go-round' trains in 1965 gave the industry a new lease of life.

THE FUTURE LOOKED BRIGHT

A traffic snapshot taken in 1973 recorded that a typical week saw 228 'merry-go-round' trains move just under 200,000 tons of coal from 13 collieries to three Yorkshire power stations – Ferrybridge, Drax A, and Eggborough.

The annual input of about 19 million tons was increased by a further five million when Drax B came into operation. Weekly diagrams were prepared by the BR computer at Crewe, and the locomotives were serviced at the new, purpose-built MPD at Knottingley. The future looked bright.

All now changed, changed utterly. And not by some act of God, but largely by Tory energy policy – if it may be dignified as such. Even the Freight Transport Association said: 'The decline in coal volumes transported by rail is directly linked to UK energy policy.'

When the government doubled its carbon surcharge on power products in April, profitability of coal-fired power stations plunged 60%, and coal by rail shipments from mines and import terminals fell by 66% in the four weeks ending 26 April 2015.

One of the coal routes to Fiddlers Ferry power station in the north-west of England used to carry 20 trains a day. That dropped to two a week. Knowing that a big price hike was coming, power generators had built up huge stocks on site.

At the same time that the carbon support price was axed, the government also dramatically abandoned a £1 billion programme to fund carbon-capture technology, in which the UK was a world leader. This short-sighted failure of judgment, severely criticised even by business commentators, spelled the end for the nation's coal industry.

Britain's last deep mine – Kellingley, in north Yorkshire – ceased production just before



Christmas, and the old model of local pit to local power station has vanished. We still burn coal, but these days it comes from abroad. It still moves by rail – as does the biomass that has partly replaced it. Rail remains the most environmentally-friendly, cost-effective way of moving bulk fuel around the country.

Official figures disclose that coal rail freight fell dramatically towards the end of last year – from 800,000 million tonne kilometres at the end of 2014 to 200,000 last November. And it will fall away to nothing, assuming that the government stands by its promise to phase out all coal-fired generation by 2025.

COAL TRAINS HAMMERING TRACKS

While the miners at the doomed Kellingley colliery worked their last shift, coal trains were hammering the tracks within spitting distance of the headgear. The coal comes into Immingham from as far away Russia and Colombia, where strip – open-cast – mines can extract the black gold more cheaply than Britain's deep mines.

So where there used to be a multitude of short-trip runs from colliery to power station, the picture now is one of many fewer, but much longer, journeys.

Coal comes into the UK at various points. Immingham is the largest, but Teesport and Hunterston, in Ayrshire, also figure in the diagrams. There are further signs of a run down, with an increasingly evident decrease of coal



Miners coming off shift for the last time at Kellingley, the last deep mine pit in Britain. There is plenty more coal underground, but the Conservatives prefer to put the men on the dole, a point Tosh McDonald, ASLEF's EC president, was keen to make in a speech of solidarity at the Kellingley branch of the NUM

hit list to only three: Worksoy, which has already gone, and, in Scotland, Longannet and Hunterston, due to close in April when Longannet power station shuts. ASLEF prevented compulsory redundancies, using a combination of voluntary early retirement and moving work from the south to affected areas.

It isn't only footplate skills that the industry loses when drivers leave the industry. Drivers of locomotives associated with coal depots also carry out railway maintenance.

'With them gone, or terminally reduced, who will maintain the railway?' asks national organiser Simon Weller. 'Where will the flexibility for Network Rail to do spot or emergency engineering come from?'

Born and bred in the railway way of life, I can't resist a small bout of nostalgia, because the list of former motive power depots linked to the coal trade reads like a roll call of railway operating history: Nuneaton, Walsall, Stoke, Sutton Oak, Kirkby, Mansfield, Coalville (naturally), Toton, Westhouses, Rose Grove, Agecroft, Mexborough, Barnsley, Annesley, Blyth, West Auckland, Stourton, Royston, Normanton ('the Crewe of the coalfields'). North of the border you had Thornton Junction in Fife, and Hurlford serving the Ayrshire mines.

On BR Western, the Welsh valleys practically lived for coal: Aberbeeg, Aberdare, Tredegar, Merthyr, Abercynon, Treherbert and Ferndale. Some depots even had the same names as the collieries they served. On the coast, depots like Severn Tunnel Junction, Newport and Barry serviced not just the domestic transport of coal but a thriving export trade, too.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF THE 1960s

This is by no means a comprehensive list, as it's compiled from memory, but it shows how widespread was rail's reliance on coal. A typical MPD, Wakefield, was almost entirely given over to heavy freight engines, and former British Railways fireman Dave Wilson, who moved up to Yorkshire from Nine Elms, recalled 'the good old days' of the mid-1960s.

'At the first of the day's deliveries, Woolley [where Arthur Scargill was working!] empties were left in one road, loaded waggons collected from another. Drop the train back onto the guard's van and then have breakfast. It was a tough job! The process would be repeated at

collieries at Gawber, Haigh and Darton. Towards the end of 1966, this turn began to see fewer and fewer waggons, loaded or empty, then days when it didn't run at all. On days when the turn was cancelled the crew would clock on as normal, then sit around drinking tea, playing cards or reading for a couple of hours, and, if no other work came in, go home again.'

This became a regular occurrence and, with the rundown of steam, eventually came the redundancy notices. The end arrived, said Dave, 'not with a bang, not even a whimper, just a sheet of foolscap telling you your services were no longer required and as a couple of hundred pounds in a pay packet.'

A similar picture of change confronts ASLEF today, complicated by privatisation and competition between freight operators, who try to get round TUPE protection. As Simon Weller points out, train crews are going through the same pain and heartache experienced by other skilled workers in the 1980s through Margaret Thatcher's liberalisation of the market and casualisation of the workforce.

DUMMY IN A DONKEY JACKET

No account of this story would be complete without a mention of the close links between ASLEF and the National Union of Mineworkers. They often lived in the same communities, and supported each other in disputes. During the miners' Great Strike for Jobs in 1984-85, drivers at coal depots refused to man scab coal trains, and were docked by BR bosses. Paybill managers deemed it industrial action, which meant drivers couldn't claim social security assistance. This was stopped by an ASLEF walkout across the country.

I also heard of imaginative action by NUM pickets. One group ganged a tailor's dummy, in a donkey jacket and holding a banner, over a railway bridge – halting the train below. And of one full coal train held in a remote siding because no driver would move it. When the time came for it to be moved, the waggons were empty. The coal had been used to heat striking miners' homes!

Coal by rail is an integral part not just of industrial, but also of trade union, history. The writing may be on the wall, but it isn't over yet and the vital contribution of coal train crews to the economy should never be forgotten.

traffic on the old Glasgow and south-western route. In 2014, one train each way once an hour was typical, whereas on 16 August last year, the only train of the day was a Class 66 taking empties northbound and returning loaded that evening.

Biomass, the 'green gold,' has picked up some of the slack. One diagram introduced by GBRf last October takes biomass imported into the port of Liverpool via Tuebrook sidings over the Pennines to Drax power station. One Class 66 can take 25 waggons loaded with 1,600 tonnes of biomass pellets.

This is only phase one of a two year project that should come to fruition with phase two in 2016, using four sets of Drax's waggons to lift capacity to 3 million tonnes a year. It remains true, however, that biomass, imported from the US and shipped across the Atlantic, takes half as many more trains to transport – which is some compensation for ASLEF drivers.

WHO WILL MAINTAIN THE RAILWAY?

All this is a far cry from the halcyon days of steam, though it shows that the railway can adapt to changing conditions. Long term, however, the outlook for coal by rail is bleak. DB Schenker demanded 235 redundancies due to the decline in coal traffic. Of these 120 were to be drivers, with the outright closure of seven drivers' depots.

Strong representations by ASLEF reduced this

Pensions – the new position



As part of its austerity agenda, the government is proposing wide ranging changes to the state pension – and not just to the retirement age. This time, writes ASLEF's national organiser SIMON WELLER, the Tories are picking the pockets of our occupational pension schemes

THE Conservative government has passed pension legislation that ends contracting out from 6 April, when the new single tier state pension comes in. When a workplace pension, like the Railway Pension Scheme, met certain criteria, people could opt out of paying into the state second pension; in return, employers and employees paid less national insurance. So the change will mean an increase in both employers' and employees' NI contributions.

Employers will be allowed to recoup their increased NI contributions by making changes to contributions and/or benefit structures without recourse to pension trustees or committees. The amount the train operating companies are seeking to recoup across all sections is, approximately, £47 million.

We had a choice, to allow the statutory override to take effect on an annual basis or come to a one-off negotiated settlement. So what do the changes mean to me?

There are two modifications to the scheme – an increase in the normal retirement age to 62, for those who are not protected, or do not have the indefeasible right, and a cap on pensionable pay. Moving cost neutral early retirement factors, the normal retirement age, to 62 reduces the liabilities on the scheme and reduces the contributions that employer and employee have to pay. Moving the normal retirement age does not mean you cannot retire before that age; it is simply the age someone can start receiving their benefits without them being reduced on an early retirement basis. If you choose to retire before 62, a cost neutral calculation is made to account for the fact that, by leaving earlier, you will receive your benefits for longer. This is only for future service; your accrued benefits are protected. For example, if you reach 60 and choose to retire and have accumulated 36 years with a CNERF of 60 and 4 years after the change to 62, only 4 of your 40/60th will have reduction applied.

Most train drivers don't retire early so end up paying through pension contributions for a benefit they don't receive. They subsidise those who leave earlier (often higher paid members of the scheme, such as managers). This change does not affect those who have



protected status or indefeasible right.

As for the cap on pensionable pay increases, for pay reviews on or after 1 April 2016 a pensionable pay cap of RPI plus 0.25% will be applied for each year for all members. Any increases above this cap will apply for future service only from the effective date. A pensionable restructuring premium will be created for that element of the pay increase above the cap. This means that past service salary will be limited to an RPI+0.25% increase each year.

This will apply to annual pay awards as well as promotional increases in pay for example, guard to driver, and development moves (year 1 to year 2 apprentices). The fact that the cap does not count for future pension accrual means that a new non-pensionable element of salary is not introduced. PRPs have been commonplace in the railway pension scheme since the first tranche of driver restructuring in the mid-1990s.

This will lead to two savings for the scheme. First, future service joint contribution rates will fall because the cap will reduce costs. Second, built-in assumptions on pay increases from past valuations are higher than the cap, reducing liabilities.

This releases a certain amount of cash in funds. This past service credit release will be released gradually and be used to reduce contributions evenly over 12 years or more.

Why have we agreed to these changes?

Primarily to avoid the statutory override being applied; coming to a negotiated settlement removes the override as an option for employers. It also has the advantage of preventing further fragmentation and dilution of the scheme. There is a real danger that some employers who have larger NI contribution increases could make deeper, far reaching changes to the benefit structures leading to a disjointed scheme and huge variations in member benefits from one TOC to another. Also, the changes make the RPS more affordable to members.

Could we have fought it?

Possibly, but we would have had to deal with it on a company-by-company basis and settlements would have inevitably introduced greater variance across the sections. These changes are a direct result of the government's changes to the state pension scheme; it introduced the statutory override



so any dispute had the potential to be political in nature.

Can I still retire early?

Yes. You can retire before 62 if you wish but pension accrued following this change will be reduced on a cost neutral basis according to how many years you leave before you are 62. Any benefits accrued before this change will not be reduced.

Does the pensionable pay cap mean I can't have a pay rise above RPI+0.25%?

No. If a pay increase is greater than RPI+0.25% it will be subject to PRS. Pensionable pay and salary remain the same.

Is this just protected members looking after themselves?

No. While the change to early retirement factors cannot be applied to the protected 20% of the scheme's membership, because of their legal status, conferred by the Railways Act (1993), the pensionable pay cap is applied to all. Nor does it create a two-tier pension; there have been differences between contribution rates and benefits for protected and unprotected since privatisation – it is an unfortunate fact of the RPS.

Will I get the full state pension as we have been contracted out in the past?

Because the RPS has been contracted out, members would always accrue the basic state pension but not the second state pension. Now there will only be a single tier pension of £155.65 (BSP is currently £115.95). Members will not automatically receive this higher amount because they haven't paid for it (because of their reduced NI). No one will receive less state pension than they would have under the old regime.

The changes we have agreed, along with the RMT, TSSA and Unite, are not where we want to be, but they are the least worse option. Applying the changes consistently and uniformly across the TOCs prevents further fragmentation and dilution of what is still a good pension scheme.

A job for life



CLIFF BLACKWELL, who has just retired after nearly fifty years working on the iron road, reflects on the good, the bad, and the funny of life on the rails

I HAVE recently retired after 49 years and 3 months on the railway, having started my career at Stratford in the mid-1960s. There was a lot of variety then and, looking back, I have seen enormous change. Steam was still operating on the Southern region in the London area – but only just. There was an abundance of new diesel traction models and, over the years, the less reliable types were withdrawn, leaving the better ones to soldier on even to this day.

SUGAR BEET SPECIAL

I was born in Stratford in east London and brought up in Leyton, not far from Stratford depot and Temple Mills marshalling yard – and, of course, Leyton Orient football club – and our neighbour there was a guy called Bill Redhead, who was loco inspector at Stratford, and may have influenced me in some way. I used to go train and bus spotting in those days using London Transport's red and twin Rovers – an early form of Oyster card – to get about.

Although I always had an interest in the railway I never thought about it as a career on leaving school. It was only when I was talking to a friend about jobs and he said he was a fireman on the diesels at Stratford that I went for a visit and thought 'Yes, that's for me,' took the entrance exam – which amounted to 20 general knowledge questions – and the rest is history, starting off on the bottom rung of the ladder as a cleaner in July 1966. In total I have only ever had three jobs – apprentice electrician, *Evening News* van boy, and the railway.

When I started the railways were busy with various types of traffic flows ranging from milk, oil, coal, steel and aggregates to bananas and many more. There were even special sugar beet workings at certain times of the year and I have also seen the



demise of parcel, paper and Royal Mail trains.

Loco hauled expresses went from being steam heated during the winter months to ETH and loose coupled/vacuum brake trains were phased out in favour of air brakes.

FORMER GLORIES

Some commuter services went from being operated by first generation DMUs to similar electric units and, of course, there was the local pick-up goods train in the days when most stations had a yard to shunt – this work is now history.

A lot of rail-born traffic from the London Docks disappeared when the docks closed and marshalling yards were shut or scaled down, becoming shadows of their former glories.

New conceptions came in, including 60mph block load trains and speed link air brake services. Containerisation started with the new Freightliner branding raising train speeds to 75mph instead of the usual 45mph or below.

Electrification from Euston to Glasgow came with the introduction of the electric Scotts, with the Class 87s removing diesel



haulage. Also the HST 125s appeared and most are still going strong. Sadly, the APT project was scrapped although I saw it many times at Willesden whilst resting my eyes in a quiet siding.

The breakup of BR saw privatisation arrive and the rest, as they say, is history. From a driver's point of view privatisation brought our salary up to something to be proud of – though there is always room for improvement.

NEEDS A NEW BODY

I have been to a few depots in my career – Stratford; Ripple Lane; Marylebone; Tilbury Riverside; Ripple Lane again and then, after depot closure, back to Stratford; with a redundancy move to Intercity Euston; Freightliner Tilbury Docks; and Freightliner Heavy Haul at Dagenham before I retired in October 2015. I have enjoyed most of my time, met some great people and wonderful characters in my railway career.

Shunting in Ripple Lane rail head, propelling a couple of wagons, a chap had parked his



Different companies, different traction, and different hairstyles, but the song remains the same for the man at the front of the train

Luton bodied van close to the railway track. I was only doing a few miles per hour, and the first wagon got past the van but the second, being slightly wider did, but there was an almighty great boom like an empty oil drum being dropped and the second wagon ripped the van's body off the chassis, making one end point towards the sky with the rear end to the ground.

REDUCED TO TEARS

The van's driver came rushing up, saying it had just had a new engine, and I retorted by saying 'Well, it will need a new body now,' and his response was that we had swerved. By this time me and the shunter, Wayne Dunstan, were reduced to tears and uncontrollable laughter. Climbing off the shunt engine we went and sat on a pile of coal to regain our composure. Then it was off to see the foreman and file a report. I never did hear the outcome.

I have always been a member of ASLEF and always advise new drivers to join up. I have seen nine ASLEF general secretaries, including Mick Whelan. And I wish you all well for the future.

Millerhill – active and unbowed – says we defy you

THE end of 2015 saw a hectic few days for the members of Edinburgh No1 branch, as several redundant drivers started new positions elsewhere – they go with our best wishes for the future – whilst a well-attended AGM agreed a raft of items for AAD. We have put forward a number of items in recent years, particularly in regard to freight. It could be no different, as we know first hand the cost of decline and mismanagement, and now face new attempts to casualise our industry.

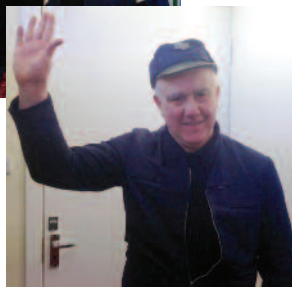
Branch membership now sits at little over 30 and my own depot, Millerhill, is down to a dihard group of 14. Nevertheless, exactly half of the Millerhill drivers attended; testimony to what remains an active and unbowed branch.

Next morning, 13 of us departed for our Christmas trip, including former branch members who have moved on in past years, and it was good to see some of the new ground staff



join us for the first time. This year we visited Hamburg; it was billed as a fact finding mission to see how DB do things on home territory, but to be fair it was more Reeperbahn than Bahnhof. Setting up camp in The Jolly Roger, the famous St Pauli supporters' bar, we soon felt at home with the locals with whom we possibly share the same outlook and anti-authoritarian instincts. The world was certainly set to rights over an afternoon of knocking back glasses of Jack & Coke and bottles of Astra.

Returning home, it was Bobby Walker's turn to retire, and most of the depot turned out to see him on his last day. A clearly emotional Bobby was presented with his framed ASLEF retirement certificate, engraved plaque, and



Bobby Walker is presented with his retirement certificate (top) before waving his colleagues goodbye (left); and an unsuspecting John Hutchison walks in (above) on his own presentation far (left)

£200 worth of vouchers by his colleagues. Bobby was quite a character, famous for wearing BR era uniform right until his last day, a regular branch attendee with a penchant for warning of the threat posed by the mega truck, he will be missed at the depot but has accepted that, after 42 years on the footplate, it's time to hang up the key. Hopefully he'll still attend branch meetings and drop into the bothy for a cup of tea now and then.

Before we had time to catch breath it was the Mayfield & Easthouses retired miners' Christmas party. ASLEF has a great history of solidarity with the mineworkers, this remaining a source of inspiration for us today. Members have attended for a number of years, but this was my first and it was an honour to hand over a branch cheque to another ex-Millerhill man, Mick Hogg, secretary of the retired miners. The excellent speakers

included Dennis Canavan, former Labour MP for Falkirk West, Dave Hopper of the Durham Miners' Association, and representatives from the Orgreave Truth & Justice Campaign, and the Free Colliers.

Present was John Hutchison, a quiet, helpful man, due to retire a few days later, who managed the apparently impossible – a long railway career without seriously falling out with anyone, or working a Sunday. When Sundays become part of the working week he retained protection from having to do so – though he would claim this led to a disproportionate



The branch hands over a cheque to the miners

number of 23.59 book-on turns being rostered on a Saturday night. The veracity of that claim may be in doubt, but what was not in doubt was the warmth of his send-off, and presentation on his last day. John is now free to spend more time in the way he loves best – with his grandchildren, and

we wish him well.

This year will be another testing time, but we must continue to rise to the challenges and never allow ourselves to be weakened and divided. Our motto is 'We defy you' and it's never been more appropriate.

Hussein Ezzedine, branch secretary



Edinburgh No1 on the road in Hamburg

John hands in his key after hanging up his footie boots

I had the pleasure to present John Drinkwater, of Stirling branch, with his retirement certificate five minutes after he became a granddad for the first time. John is an ex-professional footballer at Bradford, before joining the railway, and was a local rep and branch chair at



Stirling during his long and distinguished railway career. Kevin Lindsay

Dave on the Leam

Leamington Spa held its AGM on Sunday 13 December. We were pleased to be joined by Dave Calfe, EC member for District 6, plus Phil Spice and Roy Woodward of the Retired Members' Section. Dave spoke about the Trade Union Bill, changes to the political fund, restrictions on facility time, moving from check-off to direct debit, moves within Freightliner, the Night Tube dispute, pension arrangements, and the ballot for industrial action on Arriva



EC vice-president Dave Calfe joins the Leamington Spa line-up

Trains Wales. He also congratulated the London Midland company council on their re-election. Then Roy told us all what the RMS has been up to. We want to say thank you to all our visitors

last year. We are a small branch of 18 members, so the fact that people take time out on a Sunday to visit us is very much appreciated.

Nick Walker, branch reporter

The Golden Eagle has landed



The Imps line up in Lincoln with GS Mick Whelan, Dicky Fisher, Nigel Gibson and Howard Kaye

It was a pleasure to have the GS, EMT lead officer Dicky Fisher, District 5 Organiser Nigel Gibson, EC member Howard Kaye, and two of our company council reps, Pete Coles and Mark Letman, at our AGM at the Golden Eagle in Lincoln. Mick Whelan gave a thorough and informative talk which was very well received. He discussed the issues ASLEF has faced since he has been in post and the problems we face in the future, especially with the Trade Union Bill the Tories are hoping to get through Parliament. He talked about problems in

Scotland and the freight sector and praised national organiser Simon Weller, who leads on DBS, and Nigel Gibson, who leads on Freightliner and GBRf, for trying to save jobs on the freight side. Our DFC has had numerous meetings with EMT, mainly about Sunday working and changes to our t&cs, but with little success. Their recommendations have been sent to Dicky Fisher. Best wishes to our brothers and sisters at ATW in their fight for better t&cs and an acceptable pay offer.

Richy Doran, branch secretary

Retired Members' show hits Chingford



Spot the Leyton Orient fan at Chingford

The RMS committee would like to thank Chingford branch for the invitation to attend their December meeting and talk about the 500 Club, which allows us to run our weekend school, and about how we represent ASLEF in organisations such as the National Pensioners' Convention. We are always available to attend branch meetings; please contact our new national secretary Les Muir.

Peter Smith, RMS reporter



Mick Holder turns back time to February 1916

The editor of the *Locomotive Journal* reflects on an increase in members, a vote against conscription, and a branch secretary with his fingers in the till

SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR ASLEF

The editor writes: 'We are pleased to report a successful year for the Society during 1915, despite the war, and the adverse conditions it has created. Newport sent in the entrance fees of 41 new members. Exeter promptly capped this with 50 recruits. These two branches have run a neck and neck race during the year, and Exeter just won with 102 new members against Newport's 94. Dover has also been in the running with 96. Some progress.'

SONS OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS

About the Labour conference, held in London in January, the editor reports: 'The question of compulsion or conscription ended in a vote of 1,998,000 against any form of compulsion, and 783,000 votes in favour. A majority against of 1,215,000. This, we believe, fairly represents the opinions of organised labour against enforced military service. We quite agree that it would be quite fair to criticise some single young men as to their reasons for non-enlistment. We refer to the sons of the middle-class businessmen, who have suddenly found that they are indispensable to their father's business.'

RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

'The general secretary received complaints that men who, on offering themselves, had failed to pass the army doctors, were being asked by the companies' officials to disclose the reasons for their failure. This was promptly taken up with the general managers of the railways concerned, and with Lord Derby. Both the general managers replied that the company had no desire for this information, that it would not be used in any way against our members in their railway service, and that the GS could so inform our members.'

FOUR MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT

The editor 'regrets to have to report that the decision of the EC to prosecute any dishonest branch secretary has already had to be put into operation and, at the Leeds Quarter Sessions on 7 January, a secretary was sentenced to four months' imprisonment in the second division.'



DO2 Kevin Lindsay and District 2 council say a fond farewell to popular long standing company council rep Ian Smith.



Roy Luxford was thanked for his long service and all his hard work and presented with a decanter and bottle of Scotch at the Brighton AGM. **Steve Allison, assistant secretary**



Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF's organiser in Scotland, presents Gordon Harrington with his retirement certificate. Gordon has been an h&s rep, local rep, branch chair and assistant branch secretary during his long service to Glasgow members.

Upcoming events

LONGSIGHT – WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY

Reunion and Steve Biddulph retirement after 46 years on the railway from 14.0 at The Platform 5, Cheadle Hulme.

EASTLEIGH – SATURDAY 12 MARCH

Annual reunion from 12.0 to 18.00 at the Railway Institute, 2 Romsey Road, Eastleigh.

CRICKLEWOOD – FRIDAY 18 MARCH

From 12.0 at the RAFA club, Ashburnham Road, Bedford.

RAMSGATE – THURSDAY 7 APRIL

Southeastern retired and working members' reunion from 11.0 at the Red Arrow Club, Newington Road, Ramsgate.

STRATFORD – SATURDAY 30 APRIL

Annual reunion from 17.00 at the Railway Tavern Hotel, 131 Angel Lane, Stratford, E15. All welcome. If you require accommodation call the Railway Tavern, quoting the Stratford reunion, on 020 8534 3123. A raffle will be held to pay for the buffet; please put your hand in your pocket!

BRIGHTON & SUSSEX – TUESDAY 3 MAY

Informal open afternoon for all retired and working members at Sussex branches from 14.00 at the Brighton Railway Club. Paul Edwards (07402 478278) or Paul Horan (07868 757492).

● Please send your branch news and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk

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PHIL PLAINE A FORMIDABLE UNION SPOKESMAN WHO COULD WALK ON WATER

It is with great sadness that I report the departure of Brighton ASLEF member Bro Phil Plaine who passed away on 18 December at the age of 88. Phil's footplate career started on 11 October 1943, following in the footsteps of other family members. Phil spent his entire career at Brighton. He progressed through the various footplate grades from engine cleaner and fireman to engineman, in 1962 transferring to the motorman's depot at Brighton. Phil became a dominant figure in

Brighton No 2 branch. He held various positions, including branch secretary, branch chair, LDC secretary, h&s rep, trades council delegate, AAD delegate, district council representative (on which he also served as chair). Phil was a strong defender of all footplate staff, and our conditions, and was a formidable advocate and spokesman for his depot and the ASLEF membership. He was so impressive, and so well liked, that fellow members claimed he 'could walk on water.' Phil

will also be remembered for the very active part he played during the flexible rostering dispute of 1982 and the support he mustered for the miners during their long and bitter strike in 1984-85. He was a truly dedicated trade unionist through and through. In 1989 Phil decided to take early retirement which ended a family connection to the railway industry in the Brighton area that dated right back to the 1860s.

Paul Edwards, Brighton

COLIN GULLIVER OVERLAND TO AUSTRALIA'S IRON ROAD

Colin Gulliver passed away on 12 December at the age of 73. Colin came to the railway via a circuitous route, originally becoming a teacher in 1963, and later traveling overland to Australia where he first came to the iron road as a conductor, and later worked as a driver on the Melbourne tram network. On his return to the UK he joined British Rail at Worksop. Through the years he had many different roles, before retiring from Doncaster assessment centre in 1995. Outside the railway he was a keen member of his local CAMRA branch and also collected vintage vehicles and tractors which he enjoyed displaying throughout



Gulliver's travels: Colin on the trams down under (above) and, more recently, still sporting impressive facial hair

the UK. He will be missed by his family friends and former workmates.

Jon Gulliver, Shrewsbury



JOHN PALMER YOUNGEST DRIVER ON BRITISH RAIL

It is with great sorrow that I have to report the passing in retirement of our Bro John Palmer. Like many of his generation he had a nomadic career; always on the move, from depot to depot, as closures and redundancy drove him away from his home town of Spalding.

But what set John apart from his peers was his determination that redundancy was going to work for him, so from a start date of 3 May 1954 and having achieved passed man status at Spalding he was on his way to Hatfield depot as a registered driver at 23. This was virtually unheard of in peacetime Britain and made John one of the youngest drivers on British Rail. It would be easy to list the moves John had as driver: Hornsey steam depot, Finsbury Park, King's Cross and, finally, Peterborough but that in isolation doesn't do justice to a fine engineman, colleague and stalwart of Peterborough branch. His knowledge on a range of subjects was encyclopaedic; you could engage him on local politics whilst picking up tips to improve your herbaceous borders.

When I posted the notice of John's death at the depot one of his ex-colleagues glanced at the words, thought for a moment, and said: 'You always knew you were in for a good day when you were booked with John.' To his widow Barbara, and children Ann and Ian, we extend our condolences.

Simon Bell, Peterborough

JOHN TURNBULL £10 TICKET TO OZ



Retired King's Cross driver John Turnbull died on 24 September 2015. Unfortunately, we were not informed until the last minute, so to inform everyone was near impossible, but Les Muir and I managed to represent ASLEF at his funeral, and the family were pleased to see us there. When John left school he got a job selling ice cream and candy floss, was drafted into the army, and when demobbed, decided see the world. He took the offer of a

£10 passage to Australia and then, after a while, set off again, this time to Canada, before finally coming back to England, where he joined the railway at King's Cross. John spent his final days on the railway at Bounds Green. He usually attended our reunions but, two years ago, had a bad fall, broke bones, and never fully recovered. May he RIP.

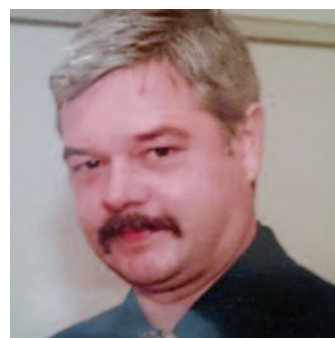
Pete Smith, King's Cross

SIMON PRICE SADLY MISSED

Birmingham New Street is sorry to announce the untimely death of one of its newest drivers, Simon Price. Simon died on 15 September 2015 aged just 44 and will be sadly missed by family and colleagues alike. Simon started his railway career at Longbridge, in the booking office, and progressed through the ranks to senior conductor at New Street where he obtained the grade of driver in January 2013. RIP Simon.

Martin Bromage-Griffiths, Birmingham New Street

RICK PENLINGTON RADIO RICKY



Radio Ricky

It is with deep sadness that I report the loss of retired member Rick Penlington or, as we all knew him, Radio Ricky. He was taken from us at such a young age (58). Ricky worked on the Central line, then eventually got to Barking on the Hammersmith & City. He will be sadly missed, as a great friend, and work colleague, so I say rest in peace Rick, and keep those messages going.

Terry Laws, East Ham



We welcome letters, either by email to journal@aslef.org.uk or by Royal Mail to ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN. The writer of our star letter wins a rich range of ASLEF regalia.

DOO – where do we stand?

The ASLEF charter states 'No extension to DOO schemes and all current schemes to be revisited and safety risk assessed. 'The recent joint statement from ASLEF and the RMT says 'We are completely opposed to DOO and its forms... and our unions will not agree to the extension of DOO under any circumstances.'

This otherwise welcome declaration does, however, appear to quietly abandon the charter commitment to revisit current DOO schemes, a point backed up by Mick Whelan whose column in January's *Journal* says ASLEF will 'not be supporting DOO where the EC determines it does not fall within existing agreements or is new' – a line which could just as easily be interpreted as a resigned acceptance of – with no intention of revisiting or risk assessing – DOO on lines such as those I work over where, all too regularly, no second person at all, far less a safety critical one, is anywhere to be found.

So what is the policy exactly and what does it amount to in practice?

Almost six years ago, when ASLEF's position on DOO was exactly the same as that stated today, I stood on a picket line with fellow ScotRail guards on strike in response to plans for DOO operation on the soon to be opened Airdrie-Bathgate link (where I now drive). In contrast the drivers, almost unanimously sympathetic, were forced to work with, to choose my words carefully, 'temporary replacement workers,' as ASLEF washed its hands of the issue. In conversation with ASLEF office holders, keen to justify their inertia, I was told quite candidly, and without a hint of embarrassment, that having effectively agreed to DOO as a safe mode of operating trains for the majority of ScotRail drivers, they could not now reasonably argue against it. 'How can we say it's not safe?' they would repeat, over and over and over.

So that is what opposition to DOO, in practice, consisted of in 2010; hiding behind the type of existing agreements Mick refers to rather than tackling DOO head on by revisiting them. Like people, trade unions deserve to be judged on actions, not words. It would be comforting, therefore, to be assured that, from now, ASLEF's actions on DOO will live up to our statements, the unambiguous commitment to revisit current schemes included. Because as Mick highlighted, DOO is not getting any safer.

Fraser Coats, Bathgate

COSTLY PUBLIC BURDEN OF LEASING PASSENGER TRAINS

Oh dear. RA Sargeant is in a bit of a muddle in January's *Journal*. First, to write off Jeremy Corbyn without any reason and declare that anyone who believes he could win a general election is 'living in a dream state and in urgent need of a reality check!' Perhaps some elaboration would be useful with regard to this controversial statement?

Then an assertion that it would take billions of pounds to buy the franchises back. I think it's been fairly clear that franchises will be allowed to run their course and then not be offered for renewal, thus returning passenger train operations to state ownership one by one. The process would be gradual throughout the 2020s but cost nothing; a step-by-step transition would be easier to manage anyway.

The bigger problem that nobody seems to have addressed is the ownership of the rolling stock.

To buy this asset from the rolling stock companies would be prohibitively expensive so we would remain wedded to them by the need to continue leasing their trains, many of which we previously owned until they were given away, for next to nothing, in the mid-1990s.

Even if a state owned railway was to own all newly built rolling stock it would take three or four decades before the stock entering service during the last half of this decade becomes due for replacement and we would rid the railway of the costly burden of leasing passenger trains.

Chris Martin, Watford

Travel rights in retirement

Looking around my depot, a quick calculation reveals that, within five years, the majority of drivers eligible for retirement will be NSG staff. Unfortunately, unlike their ex-BR colleagues, they will have no guaranteed travel rights on retiring. Comrades, I am on a good salary with SWT, mainly down to past pay deals attributable to ASLEF company council negotiators, which includes free for leisure travel for me and my dependants on SWT and sister companies, a TOC card (75% off other train operators), and I can even apply for FIP international rail and ferry travel cards (which we have used on family holidays).

It is therefore ironic that, when I retire in a few years' time, and my household disposable income falls, predictably, to a dramatically low figure compared to my salary at present, I will struggle to be able to afford to continue to travel by train.

Sometimes I wish the system was simplified to mean, while I am still in railway employment, that me and my dependants paid a small charge every time that we used any UK service (as long as neither my wife or children are not in full time employment) in return for retention of the TOC privilege card and FIP entitlement on retirement (after a minimum period of service of, say, 10 years).

Any discussions on change would involve all UK drivers and ATOC, and would therefore require the services of senior ASLEF negotiators to achieve a positive outcome. If this were to be achieved, I believe that not only could ASLEF claim to

be instrumental in winning important rights for retired NSG drivers but we would also be simplifying the existing complicated and sometimes contradictory in-service leisure travel process. As a result, I am certain that many grateful NSG drivers would more easily see the benefits of continued membership of the union when taking retirement.

Gary Trotter, Basingstoke

Picture this

I am most displeased with the picture on page 20 (*Letters Journal*, January). I find this most distressing, and did not like it when it was on the television and in the papers. We should not be publishing a picture of this little boy as, for some of our members who have lost young ones, it reminds them of something most dear that will never be replaced. I know others may like to remind us of the plight of refugees but this picture is just too much, and distasteful.

Ian Jolly, Northam

Junior doctors' dispute

This is to thank Mick Whelan for your letter regarding the junior doctors' dispute over the imposition of a new contract. The BMA has been inundated with messages of support from doctors, other health care professionals, members of the public and representatives of other unions, such as yourself. As you say, no one takes industrial action lightly.

We hope to reach a contract fair and safe for both doctors and patients.

Dr Mark Porter, BMA council chair

Hugh, Kevin and Scoop

Although I do not officially retire until 31 March – I am in the process of clearing outstanding leave until then – I finished with ScotRail on 11 December and, through the medium of the *Journal*, would like to pass on a few thanks. First, thanks to EC rep Hugh Bradley and DO Kevin Lindsay not only for the ASLEF appreciation certificate and plate (which was a nice surprise) but for all the help over the years in my various roles in ASLEF. I would also like to thank all the members in District 2 for having faith in me, especially all my comrades in the Glasgow branch who have put up with me for 28 years. Final thanks to John McCue, alias Scoop, with whom I have partnered so long it's amazing people didn't talk about us! Forty-one years on the job, 33 as a rep, have flown by, and it does not seem that long since I started at Barrow Hill (Chris Dodd will remember those days) before moving up to Helensburgh and then on to Yoker, where I met some great guys, and finally Glasgow Queen Street. So thanks to everyone I have worked with and all the best for the future.

Gordon Harrington, Glasgow

Where do we stand on EU?

With an in/out referendum on British membership of the European Union looming I hope that we, in ASLEF, can learn lessons from the recent Scottish independence referendum. Whilst the pages of this *Journal* provided an open and balanced forum for debate I think it's fair to say that the process of making union policy was slightly less robust. I'd like to appeal to ASLEF branches to consider organising in/out debates over the next few months with a view to informing ourselves of the arguments and our AAD a flavour of membership opinions.

Steven Nimmo, Edinburgh

A great asset to ASLEF

I'd like to thank Bill Williams for all the hard work he put into DCC over the last six years. Bill served six years before my time with him. A walking history book, with a great sense of humour, made him a great colleague. The four day week with Sundays inside was always his dream. I'm so pleased the last 26 working days pa were removed over our two pay deals together, along with scrapping committed hours, is something you can be very proud of, mate. You have been a great asset to ASLEF and a real industrial warrior with a lot of fight.

Steve Burgess DCC, Southeastern

Highs and lows of a rep

My LDC partner, Simon Pearce, stepped down from his role at the end of 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for all the work he has put in over the years. He and I endured the customary highs and lows of being reps and we got on very well as a team. He would always step

up to the plate when I found myself flagging. Thanks, Si, for your help.

Gary Warburton, Southeastern LDR, Battersea

Best investment I've made

I want to thank all the ASLEF members at Barnham for all the support that they've shown me. I was unfortunately involved in my first incident after eight months of driving. Because of the nature of the incident, I was facing 12 weeks' notice. But for the support of my driver colleagues, staff reps, particularly Jeff Turner and my company council reps, Kevin Eade, and a special mention to Paul Donnelly, I would no longer be in the driving grade. When I joined ASLEF, I didn't know how important being a member of a trade union would be. I do now. Clearly the best investment I've ever made. Thanks again.

Mo Basma, Barnham

Friends in railway family

I would like to thank the ASLEF committee for the generous cheque. It was very much appreciated, and has been a great help to me and my family. It is very comforting to know that ASLEF works so hard to support its members in time of need. Please also pass on my sincere thanks for the collection I received. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of individuals and branches throughout the country. I have now left DB Schenker, due to my ill health, but would like to give all my friends and colleagues in the railway family my very best wishes for 2016 and beyond.

Edward Kilbey

Right across the country

On behalf of Motherwell branch and our member Bro Ian McLeod, I would like to express our deepest thanks to all branches right across the country who contributed to our appeal for Ian. He has now returned to work but faces more reconstructive surgery in the future. The donations have greatly aided Ian during his treatment.

Andy Jones, branch secretary

Big thank you from Brum

I would like to say a big thank you to Bill Goode and all the LLC at Birmingham New Street for their help and support while I was off work, and getting back to work, after a pretty bad fatality. And a belated Happy New Year to all ASLEF members.

Rob Lowry, Birmingham New Street

Dedication and service

Following a fatality, I would like to thank the Plymouth Cross Country local staff reps and my colleagues for their support. I appreciate your dedication and service, and I know others do, too.

Neil Bramley, Plymouth



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Percy pulls the mail on time Gordon thunders down the line Thomas, he's the cheeky one

It's 70 years since **Thomas the Tank Engine** made his first appearance on the Island of Sodor. To mark the anniversary **KEITH RICHMOND** reports on the railway journey of this humble steam locomotive from one child's bedtime story to a multi-million pound global phenomenon

WHEN the Reverend Wilbert Awdry, curate of St Nicholas's Church, King's Norton, just outside Birmingham, was trying to amuse his young son who was bored and in bed with measles, he began telling him stories about steam engines. But the Rev Awdry didn't read little Christopher stories from the pages of a book; he made them up as he went along, sitting at his bedside.

It wasn't, he found, too hard. Because he had grown up just a couple of hundred yards from Box Tunnel, between Bath and Chippenham, on the Great Western main line in Wiltshire, where there was a banking engine to help freight trains up the hill. Listening, as a child, to the whistles between the engines, and the bark from the locomotives' exhausts as they fought their way for a couple of miles up the incline, Awdry had plenty of material on which to draw. He said later: 'There was no doubt, in my mind, that steam engines all had definite personalities. I would hear them snorting up the grade and little imagination was needed to hear, in the puffings and pantings of the two engines, the conversation they were having with one another: "I can't do it! I can't do it!" "Yes, you can! Yes, you can!"'

ON THE BACK OF OLD PARISH CIRCULARS

Edward – kind, if a little old-fashioned and slow – was Awdry's first creation, followed by proud Gordon and disobedient Henry. And young Christopher was entranced. 'If you're telling a story out of your head, it doesn't come out the same every time,' he remembers. 'After a while he got so fed up with me saying, "Well, that's not how it happened last time, Dad," that he thought, "Blow this, I'll write it all down and, that way, I can be sure you'll be getting

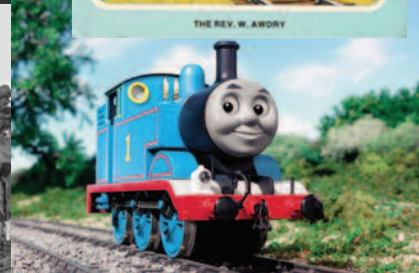
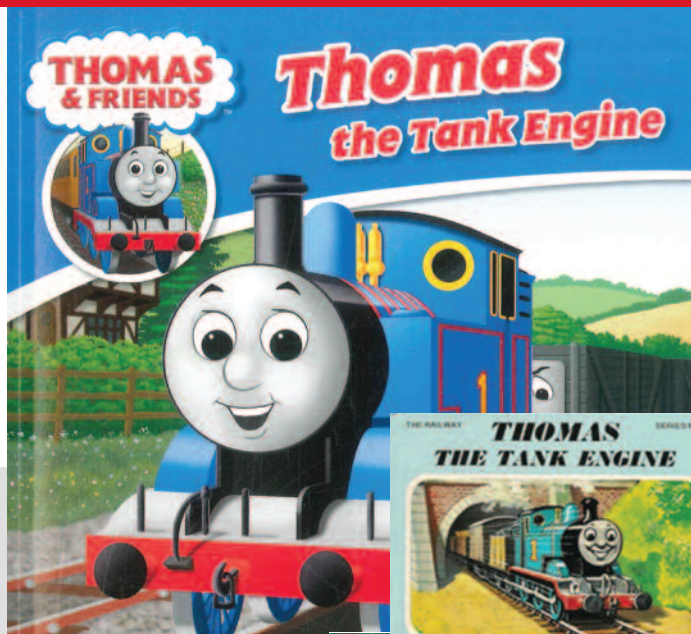


the same story every time."

Awdry wrote down the stories on the back of old parish circulars, with rudimentary sketches of his anthropomorphic locomotives, and that would have been the end of it had not his wife Margaret, frustrated by the limited choice of children's literature available on the shelves of the bookshops in Birmingham, urged him to send them to a publisher.

COME OUT OF THE STATION YARD

Faber & Faber and Chatto & Windus turned them down but Edmund Ward liked them and four stories – featuring Edward the Blue Engine, Gordon the Big Engine, Henry the Green Engine, and Sir Topham Hatt, the Fat Director (who became the Fat Controller after nationalisation) – were published as a single volume, *The Three Railway Engines*, in 1945. The book quickly sold out – 25,000 copies in six weeks – and Ward asked Awdry for a follow-up. *Thomas the Tank Engine* was published in March 1946 with this dedicatory letter: 'Dear Christopher, Here is your friend Thomas, the Tank Engine. He wanted to come out of his station yard and see the world. These stories tell you how he did it. I hope you will like them because



The Rev W Awdry with his most popular creation, Thomas the Tank Engine

you helped me to make them. Your loving Daddy.'

That, too, was successful, and was followed by books about *James the Red Engine*, *Toby the Tram Engine*, *Percy the Small Engine* and many more, featuring characters such as Peter Sam; Sir Handel; Duncan; Rusty; Annie and Clarabel, Thomas's coaches; and other pieces of alliterative engineering including Terence the Tractor, Trevor the Traction Engine, Harold the Helicopter and Bertie the Bus.

The Rev Awdry wrote 26 books in the Railway Series – pretty much one a year – until 1972. He died at the age of 85 in 1987. His son Christopher wrote another 14 books between 1983 and 1996, with two more in 2007 and 2011.

£1 BILLION A YEAR GLOBAL INDUSTRY

But it's not just the books, which are available in a plethora of editions. Models, toys and merchandise – there are 1,600 authorised Thomas & Friends

products available, ranging from lunchboxes and duvets to potties and iPad apps – as well as the phenomenally popular television series, narrated first by Ringo Starr and then Michael Angelis, in Britain, and by Alec Baldwin and Pierce Brosnan in the States, all contribute to what has become a £1 billion a year global industry. And it was Andrew Lloyd Webber's passion, as a child, for Awdry's stories that resulted in his musical *Starlight Express*.

The enduring popularity of *Thomas the Tank Engine* and the other locomotives is curious because the programmes, like the books, are anachronistic. This is a world, recognisably real in the middle of the last century, set in aspic. There's a feudal hierarchy on the Island of Sodor, a clear sense of Christian mission, and the books are big on punishment when rules have been broken. There are few jokes, an absence of post-modern irony, and no winking at parents reading or watching with their kids.

But perhaps that's the point. The stories about *Thomas the Tank Engine* are traditional tales which offer the certainties of another age. As Eddie Redmayne said when he voiced Ryan in the CGI feature film *Sodor's Legend of the Lost Treasure* last year, 'Nobody is better at being a train than Thomas.'

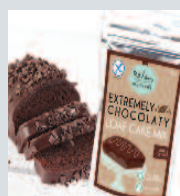
TRADITIONAL PANCAKES

Celebrate Shrove Tuesday in style on Tuesday 9 February



Sift 100g plain flour into a bowl. Whisk together 2 eggs and 300ml milk in a jug. Make a well in the centre and gradually whisk the liquid into the flour to make a smooth batter. Heat a little sunflower oil in a medium non-stick frying pan and ladle in enough batter to cover the base, in a thin layer, swirling the pan. Cook until golden underneath, then turn over and cook for another 30 seconds or so. Repeat with the remaining batter. Tip the pancakes onto plates, squeeze over a little lemon juice, sprinkle with sugar, and serve at once.

EATING YOUR PHIL



If you're on a gluten-, wheat- or dairy-free diet, you can still indulge yourself with chocolate cake thanks to Phil

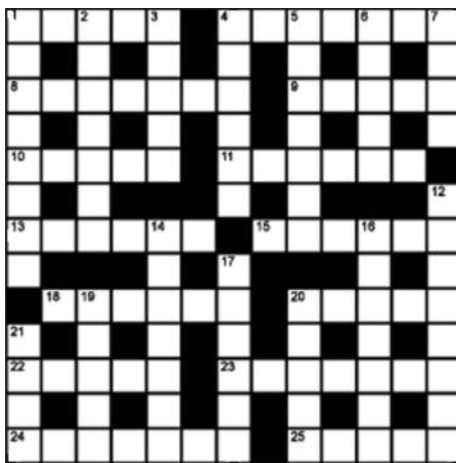
Vickery's gorgeous, and exceedingly easy, Seriously Good Gluten Free Extremely Chocolatey Loaf Cake Mix (£5.25 from Squires Kitchen) topped with his Gluten Free Real Chocolate Fondant Icing (£4.50). Call 0845 617 1810 or visit www.squires-shop.com

SHAPE UP WITH LORRAINE



Keep those New Year's resolutions going with Lorraine Pascale's brilliant book *Eating Well Made Easy* (Harper Collins, £20). It's packed with healthy, nutritious and utterly delicious recipes including Spicy Baked Eggs, Easy Herby Parmesan Roast Potatoes and Tasty Chocolate Brownies.

Prize Crossword number 118 by Zebedee



Solution to Crossword 117

Across: 1 Cloche, 4 Scilla, 9 Swagger, 10 Mummy, 11 Octet, 12 Cholera, 13 Human rights, 18 Satanic, 20 Navy, 22 Idiot, 23 Rootlet, 24 Middle, 25 Stream

Down: 1 Cosmos, 2 Op Art, 3 High tea, 5 Combo, 6 Lambent, 7 Amytal, 8 Track record, 14 Untried, 15 Gunboat, 16 Osmium, 17 System, 19 Natal, 21 Valve

Congratulations to **C Simmons** of **Bournemouth, Dorset**, who was last month's winner. The winner of this month's Prize Crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25



Across

1 Journalists; cuts (5)
4 Temporarily inactive (7)
8 Lovingly brought up (7)
9 Area of expertise (5)
10 Table covering (5)
11 A Horde; a Gate Bridge (6)
13 Former Spanish dictator (6)
15 Pressure line on a weather map (6)
18 A symbiotic plant (6)
20 Europe v US golf cup (5)
22 A horned beast (5)
23 Make aware (7)
24 Shyness (7)
25 Boat Race team (5)

Down

1 Secure (wrists) (8)
2 Argentinian city (7)
3 Melting snow (5)
4 A seabed scoop (6)
5 Charity events; a gentleman burglar (7)
6 Sharp mountain ridge (5)
7 Fuss (2, 2)
12 Salacious (8)
14 (In) league (7)
16 Starting to sprout (7)
17 Ill repute (6)
19 Covered in creeper (5)
20 Money in India (5)
21 (Glass) be very full (4)

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 117th ASLEF crossword in the January edition. If you successfully complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 February

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If you are being harassed at work, bullied or discriminated against, and if your local, branch or district rep is unavailable, call the industrial relations department at union headquarters (020 7324 2400) or email info@aslef.org.uk. If you are arrested or interviewed by police and need legal assistance – day or night – call the members' emergency hotline on 0800 587 7530. ASLEF also provides first class legal advice free for members and dependents. In the last twelve months, £6,769,848 has been recovered in damages for members.



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ASSAULT
SECURITY
DOUBLE-SHIFTING
TRAINING
APATHY
SKILLS

HEALTH AND WELLBEING
RAIL AND ROAD
RISK
LINESIDE EQUIPMENT
APATHY

POSSESSION
MANAGEMENT
SEATING
FREIGHT
BRIEFINGS
RIDDOR

WORKLOAD
SKILLS

TRAIN DISPATCH
LINESIDE EQUIPMENT
WORKLOAD
RISK
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